

### National Park Service

# GEORGE WASHINGTON BIRTHPLACE NATIONAL MONUMENT

## **Slave Monologues**



SUPPLEMENTARY CURRIUCULUM MATERIALS
For the curriculum-based education program:
How Most of the Plantation Lived: Slavery at the Washington's Farm

#### Dear Teacher,

The following slave monologues may be used separately or as a supplemental activity supporting the curriculum-based program *How Most of the Plantation Lived: Slavery at the Washington's Farm.* 

The scripts offer glimpses of daily life from four different slaves' perspectives at the Pope's Creek plantation at the time when George Washington was a child. The slave's names are from his father's 1743 property inventory and are slaves with which young George would have been familiar. Although we do not know the exact skills and duties of each slave, it was possible to extrapolate some ages and family relationships from the inventory. The monologues were researched and written by Dylan Pritchett to reflect typical slave skills and activities, interspersed with known slave names, relationships, lifeways, and events of the time.

These scripts can be used by themselves or in addition to activities in the Curriculum Materials to help students prepare for their park visit on the *How Most of the Plantation Lived: Slavery at the Washington's Farm* program. The Curriculum Materials are posted on the park website at <a href="www.nps.gov/gewa">www.nps.gov/gewa</a>. The monologues can be read by students individually, in small groups, or by the teacher to the whole class depending on the grade and developmental level of students.

We are proud to offer the following Slave Monologues to assist teachers and others in teaching about slavery, George Washington, and the colonial world and time period.

George Washington Birthplace National Monument



### <u>Kate</u> Winter of 1730

Kate is the laundress for Augustine Washington. Her skills would involve caring for the linens and clothing of the household. Also, she would be responsible for the care of the enslaved population's clothing. Spinning and weaving may have also been her responsibility.

Good afternoon. I ain't use to folks coming through the front door and wanting to speak to me! Well, if you got a moment to walk with me out to the laundry I'd 'preciate it. I have to get some fresh linen water...and there ain't as many ears listenin' outside as they is in here. Make sure you wrap up, it's a cold walk up the path.

I be glad when the house can feel warm again. It feels kinda chilly in the house and heart for over a season now. Every since Misses Jane pass away 'round wheat harvestin' time. Things just ain't been the same'round here after we had laid mistress away. Useta be we could go where-some-ever you please. But, now, with Marsa Augustine running house and home, he keepin' the eye out the window more than he useta. He get long-faced when he talk 'bout what his wife useta say or do. An' them two boys rummagin' 'round and kickin' them sweet gum tree balls everywhere once they been pile swept, just for spite. They might be ten and twelve tobacco seasons, but, I tell ya, they is somethin' watchin' after 'em all day. At they age, they need to be put to work. But, that ain't my seein' after.

But...well. I ain't one to let the let the tobacco out de crib but, well. You know Marsa Augustine been seein' this woman name Mary Ball. She right portly and dainty. He been askin' Tom Merry for his riding carriage right often when he go visit her right up de road in the east side of the county. Marsa done even take the boys visitin' an'...well, I ain't one to talk out my head by such...courtin'. Oops! I done said it! Might be some fires lit 'round here and make this ol' place warm again.



The onliest thing I wishes is that when Marsa do jump the broom again, he jump with a woman what don't keep the clock. You know, not always wantin' what they want "now". Marsa Augustine tell Tom Merry to get his horse "now". Misses want the bed linens changed "now". L'il Lawrence an' Junior done stamped they feet at Kate in the kitchen, talkin' 'bout, 'I want to taste the hasty puddin' now!' That kinda talk ain't what suits us best for us that work in the house. There is so many things to do, it ain't always best for us to do e'rything "now".

One thing I done learned. It was 'bout the time my sister, Hannah, got her right arm caught in the wagon spokes an' the doctor set her wrist wrong...that been nigh six tobacco season's ago. I never forget that time. 'Twas jus' when we started our first weedin' of the tobacco and corn rows. I was standin' in the tobacco fields an' the day turned to night! It sho' did! We looks up, with weeds in our hands, an' there was sun that was almos' gone. The sky and the fields got real

black. 'Twas day-night, I tell ya! Birds stopped singin'. Chickens started roostin'. Even the cows an' sheep an' other animals acted strange for a coupla days. Marsa called it a-clip, e-clipse, or some-un like dat. Whatever dey call it, seemed time had stopped and we was caught in it. I tell ya. I learned that day, that there is somethin' else we gotta be worried 'bout than getting' horses ready to ride or plates to set. It was a scary time. I ain't never gon' forget that day.

Ever since then I ain't take too much thinkin' on keepin' the clock. That's why when the sun come up, I try to get the work I got to do done first and the rest of what folks want to do come next. If I ran aroun' tryin' to get every whim and want done, I get behind and gonna hear 'bout it for sho'.

Now, don't mistake my meanin'. I takes instructin' jus' as good as anybody. I wouldn't be the laundress 'round here if I didn't do my chores timely-like. You jus' make sho' it's yo' time you workin' at. Elsewise, you gon' work yo'self silly.

Know what I thinks. I thinks that once you gets learnin' an' figurin' on paper, the clock change. Take li'l Lawrence and Junior. Once Marsa Augustine get them some book learnin', they gone figure how much they got to do in a day and try to do it. E'rything they do gone be done by what they put on that paper.

But, I ain't got need for no paper. Don't see much sense in it either. What good it gone do me? What good it do when when I ain't got wood enough to set a fire to do the laundry and have to go split some or get Will or Prince to go fetch me some? What good it do when the wind blows down the chimney an' ashes flyin' 'round in the parlor; soot all over the place jus' when breakfas' put on the table? What good it do when water need to be drawn from the well or yo tendin' to the tobacco in yo' field clothes an' you needed in the house? Naw, ain't much use for no clock to be put on paper.



Now, I know you thinkin' I'm uppity or complainin'. Naw, I ain't neither one. I jus' rather wake up an' make up my own mind what order to put my chores in my work pot. And it ain't jus' me that think like that. Most of us, here at the Creek, know what we got to do and jus' rather go by the sun rather than on paper. Makes you not want paper learnin'.

There is one time that we do hear the same bell ringin' though, and that is when harvest time come. That is the beginning for Marsa Augustine and one mo' endin' of a season's work for us on the Creek. When the tobacco need to be pulled, dried and packed...we on the same clock. When it's time for harvesting the corn an' wheat an' other crops....we on the same clock. We all works, even in the moonlight if we has to, when it time to harvest what we done worked on from flowers bloomin' and rakin' time.

Any other time though, one thing for sho'. When the sun go down, the clock near-bout stop. Anything that on the paper list gonna jus' have to wait 'til the rooster crow again. If somethin' such as a candle ain't in the drawer, that can be got an' lit. But, if it can't be warmed up an' ate, Kate probably can't be found 'round the kitchen. There just ain't much fetchin' going on after the sun fall. That's when our time start. That's when we eats together, sings e'ry now an' then, visit if we want or jus' plain sit aroun' an' talk. Way at the back of the east tobacco field is best. Can barely see the main house from there.

Well, I guess it be best I get back to the house with this linen water. It make everythin' smell fresh. I figure Marsa Augustine plannin' on bringin' some flower smell in the house for... Well, I know them boys, Lawrence and Junior, ain't got no yearnin' for no sweet smells in the house. Maybe Marsa Augustine 'spectin company.

### **Fall of 1735**

Peg is the daughter of the designated cook, Beck. During a period of family transition, Peg's family and fellow Washington slaves merges with Mary Ball Washington's slaves, creating a larger workforce and community. Peg, being a young girl, would gain experience from the passing down of her mother's skills.

Whew! I better take my rest. I been going about all day since the rooster crowed.

'Scuse my manners. I ain't rightly introduced myself. I's Peg. Beck, the cook is my Ma. An' you ma have seen my Pa, Frank when you was comin' up the path. He in the stable but he tend to the animas too. Anyhow, Ma been havin' me run around all mornin' getting water from the creek and checkin' the garden for some field peas and greens and such.

There's gonna be some fancy cookin' going on out here today! See, Marsa fixin' to go stay on his old family land...Little Hunting Creek dey calls it...land 'round Alexandria dat Marsa's pappa's pappa bought...long time ago. Misses Mary came out here to the kitchen early this mornin' and say she wants to have early dinner and she wants it to be special. I had a listenin' ear for a while 'til I saw Ma lookin' at me with that "why she tellin' me how to cook" look on her face. Ever since Misses Mary married and came here three tobacco seasons ago, Ma been learnin' how to bes' fancy Misses Mary. Ma say she grew up with Marsa Augustine's first wife, Jane, an' still learnin' Misses Mary.

Ma is a good cook, too. She done filled many a platter and stomach. She been showin' me what she call "the mysteries of the fire."

First thing she told me is 'bout fire. She say, 'Fire burn and heat cook," That didn't mean much thee years ago when I was ten and she told me. But, now, once I done cooked a chicken and helped with the fire cooking, it make sense. Like when Ma showed me how to roast a chicken. She pulled it in front of the fire on the hearth, put a dripping pan under it and told me to pour that grease that bird drop right back over it once I get a ladle full. I had to sit there and watch that bird turn brown as me. But, dat's how Ma teached me 'bout how to keep the chicken from burning and when to see if the bird is done. Ma say a good cook know when food is done by the way it look or the way it sounds. Vegetable bubbles usually tell you when they done by the way they sound and meat let your eye know when it's time for the fork. I done learned that. Not just dat,

but I'm beginning to learn 'bout how to cook for the Home House and how to make fixin's for us here at the Creek

Like that ham we gonna cook. After it's been cut up and gnawled and ate up at the table, it's gonna make it's way back here to the kitchen. Now, to Misses Mary, it's time to put it in the dried up well or thrown to our old dog, Duchess, to gnaw on some mo.' But, we gonna take that bone, boil it with some turnip greens, put a little red pepper in it, and smack our lips soon after. Then we gone surprise Mas' A. with a big skillet of cornbread... 'cause we know he won't eat it all...an' use it to slop up the pot liquor that's left from the mustard and turnip greens. I don't know why I'm openin' my mouth 'bout dis...you probably don't know nothin' 'bout pot liquor mustard green juice.

There's probably a lot 'bout what goes on out here that you don't know. 'Specially since us work for such high folks as Mas' and Ms. Washington. Cookin' to their tastes almost like day and night to ours. Mas' like his taters and corn boiled...we likes to pt 'em in the coals of de fire. Misses like her

chicken boiled or roasted with de brown, shiny skin....we likes to fry it up in some of that fat from the ham. They likes de ham dat been hangin all year...We likes the trotter, oh, I'm sorry, you don't know what dat is, the pig's feet is what we call trotter.

Matter of fact, the pig is what we use most. Cow, geese and rabbit all right. But, mos' everything we eats got pig in 'em. I told you my Pa work with the animals. Well, he help slaughter the hogs every fall. Just got some cut up a couple-a moons back. There is more smilin' goin' on during that time 'cause we know we gonna eat good tastin's for a while. We use the ham hocks in our black-eyed peas, pole greens and poke salad. We gets the trotter. We gets the innards or chitlins. (I ain't quite got de cleanin' right enough for Ma to let me cook dem yet.) The fat us use to cook de chicken and put in de wild greens and use to cook out the gamey taste of the squirrel, coon and deer we might catch. Cooks fish from the creek pretty fine too. And we dry the skin o' dat pig. It make good cracklins to put in the vegetables for seasoning and give a little humph to the bread too. Kate, the laundress 'round here, say that if we could catch the squeal of a pig, we'd put dat in the pot too. Kate so crazy!

Lord, I'm getting' hungry. I guess I jus' get to carryin' on 'cause I really like helpin' Ma cook. She say Misses Mary told her that some of her meals look like a picture on her table. I hope I gets dat good. Ma said I probably gonna be asked to do mo' cookin' soon. I guess I'm getting' ready. I can tend to the little spot of garden that we got. And, since mos' of us here eat stews from the big pot, Ma use what she gets from the garden and add to what left from the house table. I jus' gotta watch more of how she pinch and plop in dat pot.

I know you don' noticed my leg an' limp an' all. Same doctor what set Hannah's wrist wrong set my leg, too. Got it caught on a stairway and twisted it. Well, it ain't stopped me from doin' nothin' yet. I might not be able to run nowhere, but, that ain't my take down...I still can cook and carry. That all I need to learn to do anyhow...least for now.



Humh. What if Ma go to their new place, Little Hunting Creek, an' I stay here? I ain't nevah thought o' that. Maybe Misses Mary want her home cook, Sue, to be the house cook at they new place. That be good and proper. All Sue do now is bake all the dainties my Ma don't bake, an' get in Ma's way. Hope Sue go to Little Hunting Creek and I stay here with Ma. Well, I ain't gonna think on that no mo'.

Well, I best get back to gathering some firewood. Takes a lot of coals to keep the pots and dutch ovens warm and happy. Ma gonna make sure e'rybody get a good fillin'. Oh, and I gets the first dip in the gravy 'fore it get to the table inside. So, you know I'm gonna do all I can to make time.

### "Foreman" FORTUNE

#### Summer of 1740

Fortune lives and works at Popes Creek. His job is to be the informal foreman on the property. Fortune's duties are to make sure the work schedules are met and that the work day runs smoothly. His skill lies in his vast knowledge and skills involving every aspect of plantation management and his leadership in completing work assignments.

I'm surprised you made it out to the edge of this field as hot as it is. Take a sit down on that there stump and take your ease. I was expectin' ya earlier this mo'ning fo' the sun got over the creek. Never-so-mind. I'm glad ya cotched ol' Fortune befo' my midday break from the sun. This way, I ain't gonna hear noboby say 'Fortune! You get back at wormin' that tobacco!' Leastways, your tardy is my good fortune. Ha-Ha! Get it? Good fortune...that my..oh, well.

Whew! Workin' tobacco is spinnin' wheel work. It go 'round an' 'round' an 'round. Wormin, weedin', suckerin', toppin', wormin', weedin', suckerin', toppin'. Don't ever stop until it pulled outta the ground, split, put in the barn to dry and stemmed. You ever work tobacco? Well, let me tell ya, it's hard work.

You starts early in the year, soon as the dirt soft enough to be pushed. The land gotta be cleared. Then 'round springtime, you puts the plants in the ground, three or four steps apart from row-to-row and plant-to-plant. After that, then you gotta watch it like a cow look after they calf. In the heat you pickin' and pullin' at it. In the rain you tend to it. And after all that, you sees it put in hogshead barrels and they tote it away in the fall. You waves to it like you do a bad cold...glad to see it go.

Now mind you, ol' Fortune here ain't complainin' 'bout workin' 'rond here at Popes Creek. It kinda quiet 'round here most of the time. "Specially since that English man, John, ran away. He come here makin' bricks an' cuttin' eyes when we work. He ain't never fit in anyhow. Talkin' under his breath and sayin' we slow workin'. We kept tellin' him, "We don't need no hired servant tellin' us how to do our work.' We tol' him, 'We was doin' this when he was eatin' porridge an' we gon' be workin' the same way this when he go back.' Glad he left!

Marsa and Misses spend mos' there time at dey fam house near Fredericksburg 'long the river. Out here, we got plenty enough to do year round to keep the bones movin'. At dey house 'long the river, I calls it "Peeper's" Farm 'cause when I'm workin' 'round there you always under the stare of many eyes. I ain't too likin' of somebody eyeballin' me all day. I likes wakin' up and getting' to what I gots to do and jus' going on doin' it.

Now, don't think that all I do out here is tobacco. Oh, naw. Look 'round an' what you see? All that you see is what all us gotta keep goin'. All year long we keeps things greased and workin'. And me being, what they call the head man, keeps all 'leven of us workin' to get things done on time. I gots to make sure e'erything is done in order an in good fashion. Let me 'splain what I'm talkin' 'bout.

Let's see, durin' the winter, soon as 'Christmas gift' come out our mouths and the turn-of-the-year guns shot, we starts cuttin' down trees and weedin' out them trees that done fell in the fringe of the woods 'round where you see. We saw 'em into firewood, make posts and fence rails, and find some good wood to repair the barn, stable or any other buildin' that need repair. Sometime, when Marsa Augustine want, we work new ground to loosen it p a bit, or clear some trees for some new ground to plant. Me, Long Joe, Frank, Tom Merry, Will, all us men gotta pitch in. Seem we all do nothin' but walk 'round with a axe in our hand 'roud January and February. The women and chi'ren help tote back and forth for us, but us men's backs gets the most work. The chi'ren do help a lot cleanin' up 'round the fields and creek pickin' up trash, limbs and such.

Then 'round spring we keeps plowin' and start plantin' all the fields. Corn, wheat, peas, potatoes, carrots, all kinda vegetables we plants out here. Oh, and that tobacco I talked 'bout is tended to all dis time too! All through the summer we tends to tendin' the fields. From sunup when Beck ring the bell 'til the sun 'flection reach the creek water we workin' to get them crops in the barn and barrel.

Now, when the sun getting' low, that's when we tend to our little spots we 'lowed. Ha-ha. Marsa Augustine came out one day and say, 'Fortune, yo' peas lookin' rounder than mine!' I says to him, 'Sir, but mine don't have that midday sunshine taste to 'em though.' He jus' chuckle and go on 'bout his business.

Sometimes some of us has to go to "Peepers" Farm and help out or Bob, Ned, or Toney comes from the farm to help when we gets behind or need some more hands to the till or toil. We goes there specially when the tobacco pulled up and the corn is harvested. Then they come here and we do the same business. Us at Popes Creek and them at "Peeper's" Farm like the left and right hand during harvest.

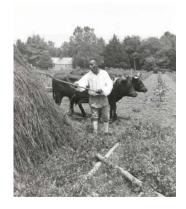
Now, 'long with all dis field work we gots to tend to the animals. The women and children do a lot of feedin' and tendin' to the animals. Beck don't like too many folks handlin' her favorite milkin' cow, Lucy. She say she and lil' Peg the only ones she want to touch Lucy's udders. So, I make sure don't nobody handle Lucy. Gotta keep the cook happy you know. But, anyhow, the sheep, cows, horses, chickens and pigs gotta get enough corn an' hay an' scraps to keep them makin' noise and happy. I learned that a happy animal make a happy meal. Leastways, I ain't seen a meal I don't like yet!

Don't want to make li'l of the time it take to tend to the animals though. The horses need fields to graze and run in, the cows an' pigs need hay to eat an' mud to cool in. We spends weeks during the year mending fences and building pens for the farm animals. They take jus' as much work to keep growing as the tobacco do. Them animals mo' impo'tant to us out here 'cause they food for now rather than tobacco paper money Marsa Augustine get. We don't get no paper out here.

The work after harvest, 'round the time the leaves start falling, we goes back to grubbing swamps, cleanin' pastures, clearin' and building new roads, getting' in fodder crops, pilin' manure for fertilizin' the fields, and guess what? That's right, cutting firewood. Lotta work. All year. Then we starts up again.

Well, I done took enough takin' my ease with ya. The only thing I got left to say is that we works out here pretty good. We works with a small gang of folks that got they rhythm workin' together. We wakes up, knows what we gotta do, an' jus' do it. An' when Marsa Augustine ask, I tells him when we might need extra hands from the farm an' they show up. We only a day's ride apart. We enjoys the talk from dat "Peeper's" Farm, Marsa's farm near Fredericksburg. They tells us 'bout how slow things get when they come here. If this is slow, I think ol' Fortune at the right place!

Well, I'm gonna get a drink from dis' here gourd dipper an' get back to work. Good day!





# **Long Joe Spring of 1743**

Long Joe is the blacksmith and also helps train the animals at Popes Creek. As a skilled slave, he would be afforded more mobility, better food and clothes than a field hand. Trips back and forth between the Washington properties would have occurred whenever his services in skill or knowledge would be needed.

Tune dat fiddle, Set dat row Move dem feet, To the ol' banjo! Leave de fiel', leave de cow Look here gal, We struttin' now!

Don't mind me. I'm jus' getting' ready for the Sat-day night. There's gon' be a gatherin' like no other. I gots to get my shirt that I don' walnut dyed an' get my riding boots dusted off so when I gets to Marsa Augustine's home place in Fredericksburg, there ain't gon' be no delay in Long Joe takin' one of the ladies for a long dance.

Now, I ain't usually no "fluity-doodie" when it comes to Saturday night gatherin's. But, it's spring, the birds is



chirpin' loud, the crops all put in the ground now, and I'm ready to do some relaxin'...even if only for a night. Gonna take Jemmy along with me this time since I'm gonna be needed for two weeks of forging. Marsa Augustine been dabblin' with iron furnaces lately and wants me to make a few things for the hearth and home. And now, that his son don' got back from his learnin' in England and he got all his chil'ren together again, he in a mighty good mood. When I gave him a smile and looks him in the eye an' ask 'bout bringin' Jemmy, he say, 'fine' outright.

Jemmy might still talk like a new Negroe, but he gon' be able to hit the drum with some of his home beats. Them folks gon' like Jemmy's dancin' too. I'm gonna keep him close to my hip, though. He being from cross the big water and wearin' his hair twisted up like twine and all, folks might not take on to him right off. But, he be alright. He help me a lot this spring with the oxen and plowin'. I tell ya. Jemmy might end up takin' my place one day. He sho'got the hands for baskets and fixin' things 'round the farm. He good at wood and metal. Yup. He be good 'placement for Long Joe. I ain't got no family 'round here to pass my hands onto. Jemmy can learn.

Now, this here gatherin' gon' have folks from Mars' Augustine's home place, that's least thirty folks, they gon' some King George County folks too. There's always new folks to peep at and old ones to sit and stare with. Long as there's a banjo and a fiddler we won't have nothin' to worry 'bout. We gon' pat Juba and dance 'til our feets tired.

Only thing might put ashes on the coals. Somebody might-a bent Mars' Augustine's ear too much 'bout las' year's uprising in South Carolina. Seem some slaves was beatin' drums and dancin' 'tween uprising. Since then, some marsas skiddish 'bout gatherin's. Ain't no reason to stop us from gatherin' jus' 'cause of them. This the onliest time we get to ourselves and long as we back to work when we called it shouldn't matter. Hard to tell what the white folks might do though.

You know, when I think on it, there ain't many times we got like these gatherin's. Things we do jus' for us. Sho,' e'ry now an' then we steals away to the woods to hear some preachin' an' do a li'l singin'. But, ya

know, without these gatherin's an' church meetin' in the woods, we ain't got many times we take ownership back.

Oh, wait now. There is the cockfights, horse races and night shops. Most e'rybody at them. Rich folks, poor folks, free folks, slave folks, e'rybody goes to them. Kinda strange though goin' drinkin' an' gamblin' an' passin' shillings from hand to hand with them you know who own yo' dancin' partner, or yo' wife or husband's marsa. Kinda strange places. Seem strange to drink with all kind of folks sittin' 'round, too. I'm sure the rich folks wonderin' if the gamblin' against their own money got from ill gains. I ain't one to frequent them places. But, I hear they places where they ain't much drawing ranks long as folks act like folks 'sposed to.



I rather jus' play a drum an' dance or strum on that qua-qua...that four-string, gourd banjo. Hope there's enough ladies to dance with. I 'member las' year most the ladies was carryin' babies in they belly or arms. Seem May and June a big time for folks havin' chi'ren. Leastways slave women. I ain't figured if it mean that there more celebratin' 'round harvest time or women jus' tryin' to get out of a lotta hot, bendin' down, summer work 'cause that when they get their layin'-in time. I don't blame them though. Guess I'd find a way to stay out the sun if I had a way to get some lay-in time.

Yup. These seem like good times 'rond here. Like I say, Marsa Augstine got all his family back; he buyin' up houses and dabblin' in iron business; pas' coupla year's tobacco and wheat done get some pounds and shillings jinglin'; seem like it time to pray.

Reminds me of that woman we useta see e'ry now and then 'cross the creek on Sunday mo'nings. Ain't seen her in a while. Say she was visitin' her marsa's place in Goochland County and got baptized by some roaming preacher. She be just prayin' and whalin' her hands about. And when she finish prayin' you could hear her 'bove the ripples, waves an' geese. She sing..."Lord I want to be a Christian, in-a my heart." She sing an' sing an' when she through, she jus' get up off her knees, brush off her skirt and go on back to her quarter. Seem like she believe in somethin' that true to her. Folks was talkin' at one of the gatherin's 'bout a lotta baptizin's of slaves that done found religion. All I know is, I ain't seen much prayin' 'round the main house. Of course, I'm sure they too proud to show such. But, there should be some bent knees 'round here since things goin' so good.

Well, enough of this melocholy! I gots to be fixin' to get down the road. Wish I had some roosters that trained to scratch. We ain't got nothin' but layin' hens peckin' 'round e'rywhere. Might pass a cockfight and make me a few shillings 'long the road if I had a fightin' bird. Naw, I best stick to what I know best...dancin', singin', and tendin' to the forge and beasts of burden. That done fit me jus' fine this far!